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blue Dan! and trouble enough have I had to arrive among you; but you see me as I am, in a condition which, if it does not entitle me to your approbation, should at least secure for me your sympathy." Daniel suffered no disparagement by appearing before his grave seniors like a man who had been dyeing all his life. He passed the dreaded ordeal with honor, and the wits said that he had no reason to be discontented with the storm which blew him into a port where honor and welcome attended him; at the same time they advised him not to stick to the color, and proposed to him a thesis, which should have for its device, "*Nimium ne fide color.*"—*Habits and Men.*

MATTHEW PRATT.

MATTHEW PRATT, the subject of this notice, was born in Philadelphia, on the 23d September, 1734. His father was a goldsmith. Matthew Pratt received such an education as the common schools in the city afforded, and at the age of fifteen was placed an apprentice to his uncle, James Claypoole from whom (to use his own words) he learned all the different branches of the painting business, particularly portrait-painting, which was his favorite study from ten years of age. This allusion to the different branches of the painting business, shows plainly the degraded state in which the Arts were at that time in this country.

Passing over the period of his apprenticeship, and two years during which he followed his profession in Philadelphia, we find him, in October, 1757, embarking on board a small vessel for the island of Jamaica, having ventured a great part of his property in a mercantile speculation. The vessel in which he sailed, was commanded by his brother-in-law, Enoch Hobart, father to the late Right Reverend Bishop Hobart, of New York. His abandoning the Arts at this time is not to be looked upon as an evidence of his want of encouragement, but as a disposition to see the world. The voyage to Jamaica, however, in a pecuniary point of view, was not very successful. The vessel was captured and plundered near St. Lucia, by a French privateer, and after a week's detention was retaken by a British ship. The result of this adventure was an agreeable residence of six months in Jamaica; and he did not reach home until late in 1758. He now, for the first time, regularly pursued portrait-painting, and met with the most perfect success, giving general satisfaction to his employers, and receiving an ample reward.

In 1760 he married Elizabeth, the daughter of Mr. Charles Moore, merchant, of Philadelphia, and four years after he prepared for his departure for England.

It is now for the first time that the manuscript from which I compiled this sketch speaks of Benjamin West. When or how the friendship between them commenced, I am unable to determine; but from his journal it appears that Mr. West had entered into a matrimonial engagement, three years previous, with Miss Betsey Shewell, a relation of Mr. Pratt's father, and the present voyage was made in company with Miss Shewell and Mr. West's father, for the purpose of terminating that engagement by marriage. The passage out was speedy and pleasant—twenty-eight days from the Cape to London; and in three weeks after their arrival, the marriage ceremony was performed at St. Martin's church in the Strand, Mr. Pratt officiating as father, and giving away the bride. The whole party then made an excursion to Mr. West's aunt's in Oxfordshire, and to his brother's in Berkshire, and returned to London after a delightful tour of several weeks.

Mr. Pratt was now located as a member in Mr. West's family, and studied his art under him with close application, and received from him at all times (to use his own words) "the

attentions of a friend and brother." He continued in England four years—eighteen months of that time being spent in the practice of his profession in the city of Bristol; and it is to his studies and improvement during this period that we are to look, as the cause of his attaining a professional stand of high respectability. In 1768 he returned to Philadelphia, and recommenced his business at the corner of Front and Pine streets. His situation and the nature of his business may be in some degree elucidated by referring again to his manuscript. "I now met with my old friend, the Rev. Thomas Barton, who came purposely to introduce me to Governor Hamilton, Governor John Penn, Mr. John Dickenson, Mr. Samuel Powel, the Willing family, the clergy of Philadelphia, &c., &c.; among whom I met with full employ for two years." This pleasant and successful career was interrupted by some family concerns of importance, which rendered his presence in Ireland indispensable. Accordingly, in March, 1770, he sailed for Newry, a fellow-passenger with Mr. Joseph Reed (afterwards Governor of Pennsylvania,) and soon after reached Dublin. Among others with whom Mr. Pratt formed an intimacy in this place, was the Rev. Archdeacon Mann, from whose family, during his stay, he received every species of polite attention. By way of acknowledgment for so many favors, he painted a full-length portrait of the Rev. Doctor, in his canonical robes. This picture was placed in an exhibition by the Dublin Society of Artists, and its author received no inconsiderable share of praise and commendation. In the latter part of his time, he proceeded to England; and during two weeks that he remained in Liverpool, was assiduously occupied in painting portraits. From Liverpool he went to Cork, and soon after sailed to Philadelphia.

Having returned to Philadelphia, Mr. Pratt never left it again, but pursued his profession with unabated zeal and industry. Many of his portraits extant prove him to have been an artist of talent and capacity. Among these I would notice, as works praised by competent judges, a portrait of the Duke of Portland, and one of the Duchess of Manchester; also a scripture piece, the "London School of Artists," and a full-length portrait of Gov. Hamilton, now in the possession of his family.

Devotedly attached to his profession, and governed by the spirit of the times, and feeling that the legitimate path of the limner could not support an increasing family, Mr. Pratt painted at intervals a number of signs, some of which, until within a few years, have been hanging in this city.* Amongst these, perhaps the best was a representation of a cock in a barn-yard, which for many years graced a beer-house in Spruce-street; the execution of this was so fine, and the expression of nature so exactly copied, that it was evident to the most casual observer that it was painted by the hand of a master. Most of our old citizens recollect the sign of the grand convention of 1788, which was first raised at the corner of Fourth and Chesnut streets. On this piece Mr. Pratt gave portraits of most of the distinguished men assembled on that occasion, and for some time the streets were filled with crowds occupied in identifying likenesses.

After spending a life principally in the cultivation of the Arts, of which he was in this country a most effective pioneer, he was attacked by the gout in the head and stomach, and died on the 9th day of January, 1805, aged seventy years, three months, and nineteen days.

Of the picture of "The London School of Artists," painted by Mr. Pratt, Mr. Sully says, "This picture was exhibited in our academy some years ago, and was so well executed that I had always thought it was a copy from West. The whole-length of Governor Hamilton I have often seen at the Woodlands, near Philadelphia,

* Philadelphia.

and considered it a very excellent picture, and worthy to pass for one of West's."

Between the years 1760 and 1764, Mr. Pratt painted portraits occasionally in New York. I have seen a full-length portrait of Governor Colden by him, and there are in the Walton family several of his pictures. Tradition says of him at this time that he was a gentleman of pleasing manners, and a great favorite with the first citizens in point of wealth and intelligence.

From the venerable Mr. Thackara, we learn that Pratt, when a boy, "was a schoolmate of Charles W. Peale and B. West, at Vidal's school, up the alley, back of Holland's hatter's shop, Second street, below Chesnut. At ten years of age he wrote twelve different handwritings, and painted a number of marine pieces, which are now in the family. He assisted C. W. Peale to form the first museum in Philadelphia, southwest corner of Third and Lombard streets. When in England, he assisted West in painting the whole royal family." I give this as received from my respectable friend, Mr. Thackara; but it seems at variance with the memoirs of C. W. Peale, in respect to Pratt, West, and Peale being schoolmates in Philadelphia. Mr. Peale was seven years younger than Pratt, and was born at Chesterton, eastern shore of Maryland, and did not visit Philadelphia until he was a married man and a saddler; according to his son's biography of him.

It is well known that many a good painter has condescended, and many a one been glad, to paint a sign. I have been told that it is very common in Paris. In Philadelphia the signs have been remarkable for the skill with which they are designed and executed. Beside the signs mentioned above as painted by Mr. Pratt, a Neptune and a Fox-chase, with many others, came from his work-shop. One of the signs mentioned above is thus noticed in a letter from M. M. Noah, Esq., to me, and published in my History of the American Theatre. He says a prologue he wrote when a boy "was probably suggested by the sign of the Federal Convention at the tavern opposite the theatre (the old theatre in South street). You no doubt remember the picture and the motto: an excellent piece of painting of the kind, representing a group of venerable personages engaged in public discussions. The sign must have been painted soon after the adoption of the federal constitution; and I remember to have stood 'many a time and oft' gazing, when a boy, at the assembled patriots, particularly the venerable head and spectacles of Dr. Franklin, always in conspicuous relief."

I insert with pleasure Mr. Neagle's testimony to the merit of Pratt, and it is the testimony of an excellent artist and judicious man.

"I have seen the works of Pratt—portraits and other subjects. I remember many signs for public houses (now all gone) painted by his hand, and I assure you they were by far the best signs I ever saw. They were of a higher character than signs generally, well colored, and well composed. They were like the works of an artist descended from a much higher department. One of a game-cock, admirably painted, which was afterwards retouched or repainted by Woodside. It was called the 'Cock revived,' but with all Woodside's skill, it was ruined, and I have heard he confesses it. One of the Continental Convention, with they say good likenesses. One of Neptune, &c., for Lebanon gardens in South street. One admirably executed Hunting Scene, with sun-rise, in Arch street. A 'Drovers' Scene, and others, most of them with verses at bot om, composed by himself.

"Pratt's signs, or at least those attributed to him by his son Thomas, were broad in effect and loaded with color. There is no niggling in his style or touch. I remember them well; for it was in a great measure his signs that stirred a spirit within me for the Art, whenever I saw them, which was frequent."

DUNLAP.